

[eBook]

How to Handle Internal Emails as a Successful Internal Communicator in 2019

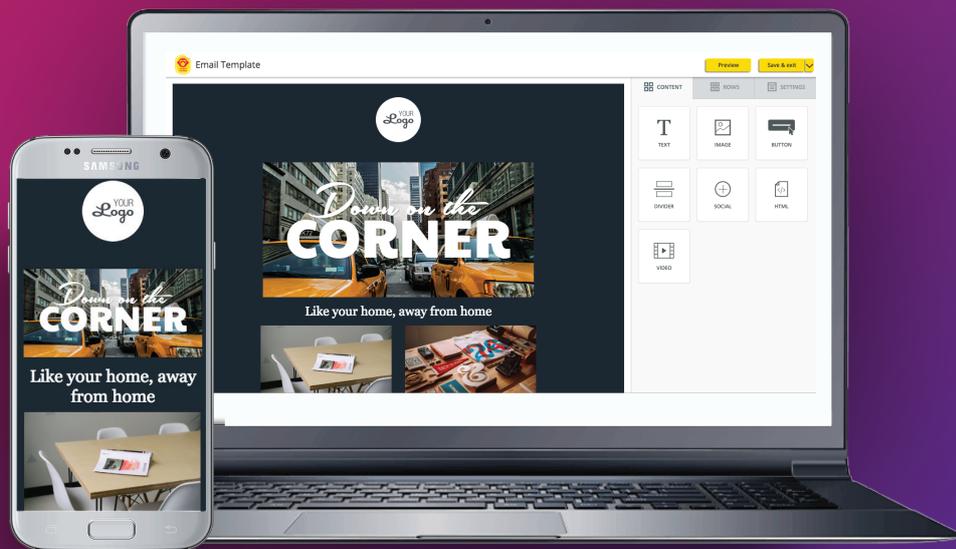


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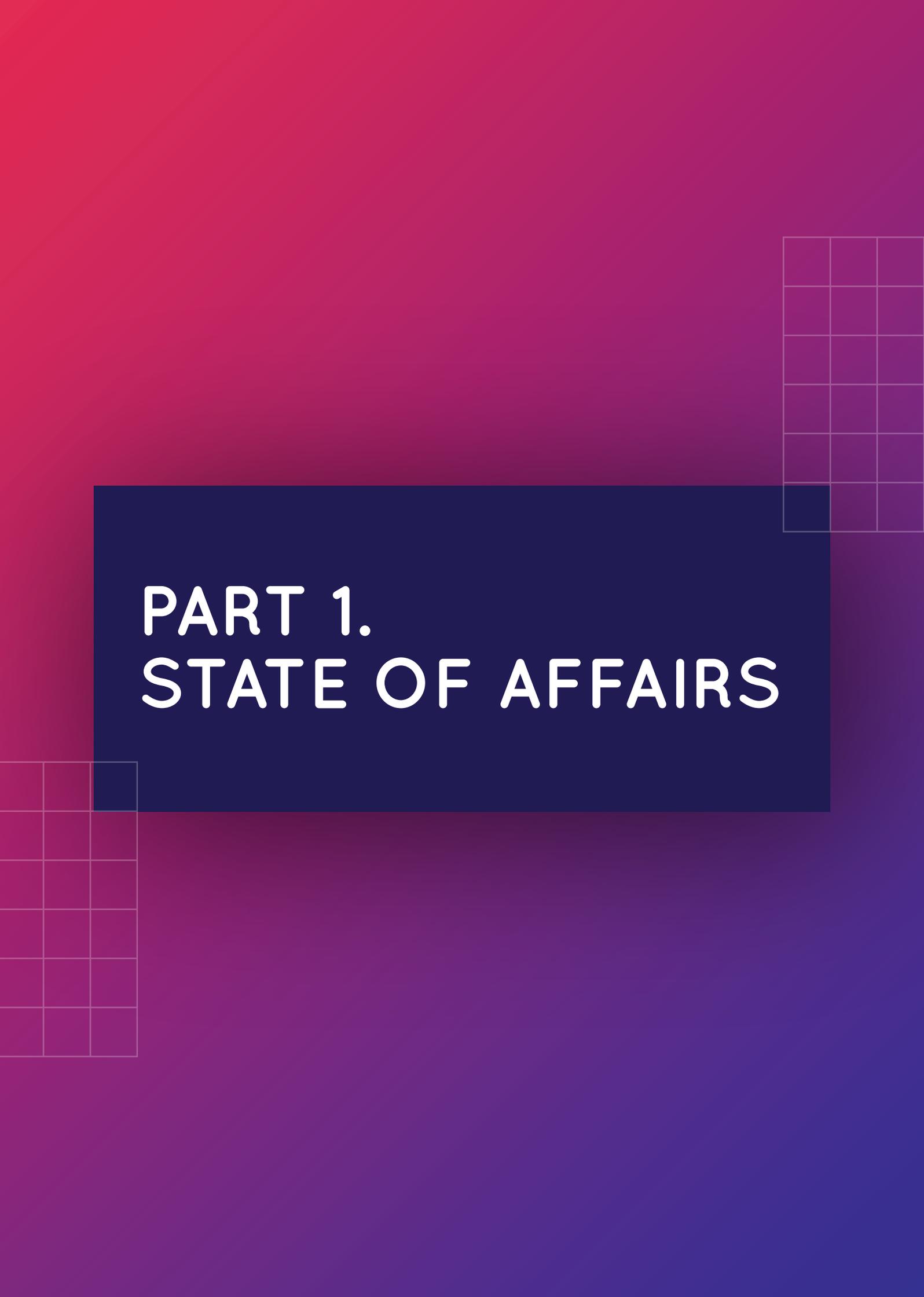
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**PART 1.
STATE OF AFFAIRS**

Executive Summary

Oh email ... Probably the most talked about technology in the workplace since the first electronic mail was sent in the early 1970s. Since then, we've heard of the death of email so many times that it has become a tired cliché. Even making fun of the cliché is cliché itself!

For that reason, we'll abstain from all clichéd jokes, since all of us in the business (and in the art) of communications know that you just can't do away with email.

In fact, **a recent report by Ragan Communications* found that the most frequently used internal channel is email (98 percent of those surveyed said this was their #1 tool).**

Not only is email here to stay, with so many different tools that offer messaging features -- Slack, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram -- email has become essential as a tool that is official, important, and still deemed serious enough to care about.

That being said, like anything that's been around for too long, people just assume it can't be fixed or that its low quality is unavoidable: death, taxes, and bad emails?

Even though most of the communicators we talk to on a daily basis are data-driven, many have become too forgiving of horrendous metrics: super low engagement and open rates; disengaged employees leaving companies at record highs, and much more.

What this means is that there is a lot of room for improvement.

Here's what you'll need to get right in 2019:

For one, just plain text won't cut it anymore. This means you'll need the ability to make emails visually appealing, without having to rely on anyone else.

Secondly, you'll also need to make sure your emails are responsive on any device, since most people now use their phones to check their emails.

Lastly, we'll also show you how to claim your deserved and needed place as an influencer within your organization. No longer are internal communicators expected to wait or cheer on the sidelines while the "real business" takes place. Now, with increased global competition, internal communicators need to step-up and shape the fate of businesses, with measurable, objective results.

Let's get started. See you on the other side!

Disruption: The Biggest IC Challenge

Defining Disruption

Usually, disruption happens when leadership changes or when new technology is implemented or there are changes in regulation in highly regulated industries.

With rapidly evolving tech, these changes are exacerbated with new tools for Internal Comms (IC) emerging everyday, causing many IC pros to live in a state of continuous overwhelm.

Email overload is also seen as a problem yet email is also the most heavily used medium among internal communicators.

The reason conondrums such as these are taking place in the first place is largely because of technological disruption. In such a digitally noisy world it's hard for internal comms pros to cut through the noise and communicate with impact.

This leads us to ask a critical question, posed by Master Communicator, Priya Bates, "In an age of disruption, what role are you, as an internal communicator, playing in influencing conversations and enabling employees to be ready for change?"

Tips for communicating effectively in an era of disruption:

- **Understand your role as an internal communicator.** Your job is to listen to employees and executives, ask questions and create a plan that provides the right message to the right stakeholder at the right time.
- **Be aware of what kind of disruption is taking place** and why it's happening. Make employees aware of what's happening and ensure they understand why it needs to take place.
- Embrace technology and be open to adopting new tools that help you **measure** and prove the value of internal communications to C-Suite executives.
- **Leverage the power of disruption!** Use it as an opportunity to showcase your superpower as a stellar communicator and work with HR, executives and employees to ensure everyone can transition smoothly.



The IC Experts Weigh In: What's Hot in IC

In an age of disruption, it's pertinent to consider what the movers and shakers within the internal comms field have to say regarding the main challenges facing the industry.

Is it email overload? Obtaining executive buy-in? How to measure internal communications? Here's what the experts have to say.

1) Creativity in IC is Essential

In order to be truly effective in their jobs, it is essential for comms pros to channel their inner rebel and let their creative juices flow freely.

Helen Reynolds, Director of Social for The People and Author of the Comms Cartoons, is a huge advocate for embracing creativity in your internal communications.



“The best communicators are seen as their organization’s problem solvers, and innovators – which are other ways of saying they are creative. **As the workplace is increasingly looking to automate tasks, our creativity is becoming more important (and keeping us employed) as it’s a talent that robots can’t beat us at!**”

2) Leverage Internal Influencers

According to Speaker and Author, Leandro Herrero, the five most influential people in the organization can reach more than double the amount of employees than an executive team*. By tapping into the power of these influencers, managers can use them to communicate necessary changes or make them architects of an initiative.

In an article from the Harvard Business Review, David Krackhardt and Jeffrey R. Hanson also explain the power of these informal influencers:

“**Often what needs attention is the informal organization, the networks of relationships that employees form across functions and divisions to accomplish tasks fast. These informal networks can cut through formal reporting procedures to jump start stalled initiatives and meet extraordinary deadlines*.**”

The IC Experts Weigh In: What's Hot in IC (Cont'd)

3) Obtaining C-Suite Approval

Getting a seat at the table with executive leadership is hard! But there's no doubt about the fact that it's something internal comms pros need.

This sentiment, of the importance of getting executive-buy in, is also shared by **Advita Patel**. We had the chance to chat with her about the current state of internal communications and about how internal comms pros can become trusted advisors.

"I do think that we need to stop talking about having this 'seat at the table' and start working towards building ourselves as trusted advisors," she says. "I know it's been a bug-bear for many over the years that we are not taken as seriously as our PR friends, but **I find working with leaders on a 1-2-1 basis and building trust is more impactful than sitting around a boardroom table.**"

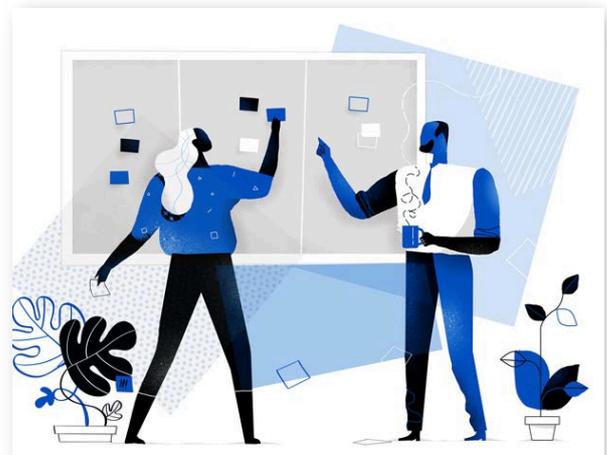
4) Moving Away from the Tactics to Focus on Strategy

Many internal comms pros often want to jump straight into tactical solutions for their organizations without having a strategic plan in place.

Award-winning communications professional and President of Inner Strength Communication, Priya Bates, words it perfectly:

"When embarking on Internal Communications, so many organizations start with newsletters, town halls, intranets without doing the planning that will help an organization use communication to enable an organization to deliver real results. In the future, treat communication success just like business success. Have a strategic plan before delivering the tactics*."

Preach, Priya! Preach!





**PART 2.
WHERE ARE WE
HEADED IN 2019?**

It's All About Adopting a Multi-Touch Approach

Although internal communications is largely a distinct function that serves a very specific role in organizations, IC folks find themselves overlapping quite often with other departments, such as Corporate Communications, PR, HR and Marketing.

It therefore becomes important to adopt various approaches from Marketing, PR and other departments in order to truly engage employees.

This multi-touch approach also applies to the various communications channels used. The 2018 State of Email Report by Litmus* notes that email marketing can no longer afford to operate in a silo and nor can any other communications channel.

Research by Iterable further shows that **a cross-channel marketing strategy delivers 3X more effective campaigns and 23X higher rates of audience satisfaction***.

You need to use multiple tools and approaches to reach and engage your employees. Whether it's email newsletters, ABM campaigns, podcasts or videos, using a multi-touch approach will enable you to gain an edge in the battle for your employees' attention and engagement.

With that being said, email as a communication channel can't be ignored either, especially with most comms professionals relying heavily on email to communicate.



Fast, Beautiful & Responsive Design

As far as email is concerned, internal communicators need to look at what marketers are doing and apply many of those strategies to engage their employees.

The 2018 edition of the Litmus State of Email Report* analyzes the biggest email developments and what those changes mean for those using email as a primary mode of communication -- a.k.a everyone.

Many of the findings of the report show that **marketers and internal comms pros are both looking seriously towards mobile, which makes mobile responsiveness a top priority for 2019. Furthermore, both marketers and internal comms pros are also looking to increase engagement with their target audience.** As you very well know, internal engagement and beautiful responsiveness go hand-in-hand.

What this means for communicators everywhere is that, **if you want to compete for attention with funny GIFs on Twitter, or memes on Slack, your emails better start looking the part.** This means you'll need the ability to make emails visually appealing, without having to rely on anyone else. Sorry, designers.

From the conversations we've had with our internal comms clients, we also noticed that IC pros were having difficulties creating beautiful and responsive HTML emails using Outlook. Outlook can often mess up the formatting, causing a great deal of pain and frustration.

We also noticed how many IC pros had to depend on their designers and developers to help them create responsive email templates. In today's fast paced world, needing somebody else to get your job done just won't fly.

In Part 4 of this guide we'll show you how you can build your own beautiful, responsive emails within seconds, without anyone's help.





PART 3.
**4 WAYS TO STAY
AHEAD IN 2019**

4 Ways to Stay Ahead in 2019



89% of internal comms pros feel increasing employee engagement is a top priority.

Yet, most internal comms professionals report a lack of understanding on how to effectively reach employees. **93% of comms pros also feel that it's important to measure internal communications across all channels yet only 27% can do so***.

Here are 4 tips to boost employee engagement & stay ahead of the curve in 2019:

1) Personalization and Segmentation

Personalization and segmentation is a hot topic in marketing but often ignored by comms pros. Personalized emails and subjects lines increase click-through-rates (CTRs) by 14%*.

Campaign Monitor further reports that segmenting email contacts into various groups according to age, gender and location, can lead to a 760% increase in revenue from segmented campaigns*.

It therefore goes without saying, that in a time where you can customize everything, from your coffee cup to your running shoes, shouldn't you also do the same when it comes to boosting employee engagement?

Tips for personalization & segmentation:

- **Use distribution lists** to manage your various employee lists according to country, region, department etc. so you can tailor content to meet the needs of employees accordingly.
- Ensure you are **personalizing the subject line and body of the message**. For example with tools like ContactMonkey, you can simply click on any merge field you like, such as First Name, and use it in the subject line to personalize mass emails.
- Use your segmented lists to **identify internal influencers** from various departments based on their email opens and engagement levels.

2) Get Over Your Fear of Metrics

Does the thought of measuring your internal comms make you break out in a cold sweat?

If you truly want to boost employee engagement in 2019, it's time to get over this fear. We've got you covered on which email metrics matter for you to effectively measure employee engagement.



Tips for measuring personalization & segmentation:

- **Make sure to measure email opens** to gauge whether people are in the know of important company announcements. If your open rates are low, try testing different sending times to find out what works best, while playing with different subject lines. For example, you can try asking a question or personalize each email with the employee's first name.

- **Link clicks is another metric to keep your eye on** to gauge engagement levels. A high CTR tells you the content you're sending is engaging your audience and a good indicator of healthy employee engagement. Conversely, a low CTR could indicate that you need to change subject lines, your email design or even the manner in which you deliver your messages.

- **Modern tools such as ContactMonkey allow you to further measure the location your employees are viewing emails from.** This is incredibly helpful if you have remote workers or several branches in various cities. By tracking which content resonates the best in any given branch or location, you'll be able to better segment your internal emails and increase engagement levels.

- As mobile opens account for 59% of all email opens, **you need to evaluate which devices your emails are being viewed on***. Understanding which device is most popular among your employees can teach you what type of email they like receiving.

3) Leverage the Power of Storytelling

Stories are how humans have always communicated and come to understand the world.

An effective story will always draw your audience and is an excellent way to forge a strong bond with your employees. Whether you're communicating with the C-Suite or engaging employees, make sure you're always painting a vivid story.



Tips for effective storytelling:

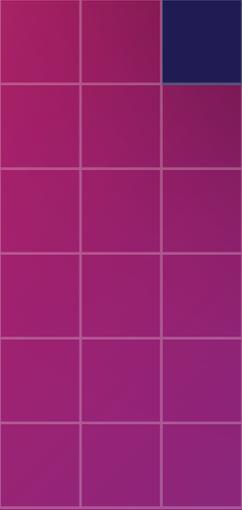
- **Don't forget your why.** Why are you telling this story? What do you hope to achieve out of it? And most importantly, ask yourself, what's in it for your target audience. Why should they care?
- **Use a combination of different visual elements** such as memes, gifs and videos to engage and entertain.
- **Make your employees the engaged storytellers.** Feature them in your internal videos, campaigns, social media, newsletters or engage them with innovative ideas such as gamification.

4) Embrace Video

According to HubSpot's 2018 State of Video Marketing Report, 81% of businesses use video as a marketing tool and 99% of those already using it claim they'll continue to do so*. So video definitely needs to be a key part of your internal communications planning -- here's how:

Tips for awesome video engagement:

- **Showcase your company's culture in a video.** Get internal influencers to become the stars of your video and boost engagement! This will not only help your company attract top talent but also retain current employees.
- Make employees feel like they're a **part of your company's story** by getting them to narrate their unique employee experiences in the video. You'll not only be able to showcase your company's story but also garner engagement and make current employees feel special.
- **Use video to train and onboard new employees.** Time to tear up all those welcome aboard manuals! Instead, use video to update your employees on company values, policies and procedures!



PART 4. EMAIL TEMPLATE BUILDER.

Email Template Builder: Complete Autonomy for Communicators

In our daily talks with hundreds of communicators we always get asked the same question: *how can I build great HTML emails without the help of a designer? I don't have the time or resources to wait for a designer.*

For that reason, this year our product team worked their ass*s off to introduce a tool that's already changing the life of dozens of internal comms teams around the world.

Introducing: Email Template Builder for Internal Communicators in Outlook



Our new email template builder enables you to **choose from and edit dozens of beautiful templates — or make your own using easy-to-use drag and drop content blocks.**

The ContactMonkey Email Template Builder coupled with our Outlook Mail Merge tool truly gives you the best of both worlds: **the power of the cloud without having to leave Outlook to send and track beautiful, responsive internal emails to your Outlook distribution lists.**

What's even better, you can also save your templates under your “My Templates” section of the tool, so you can continue using your favourite personalized templates.

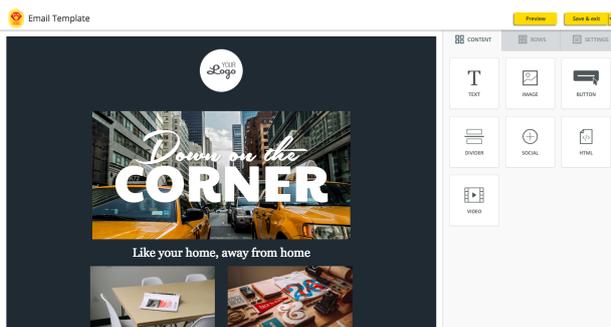
Let's show you how to use it!

Email Template Builder: Quick Tour

The Email Template Builder Tool will make creating beautiful internal emails simpler, more fun and more effective. Here's what you'll see:

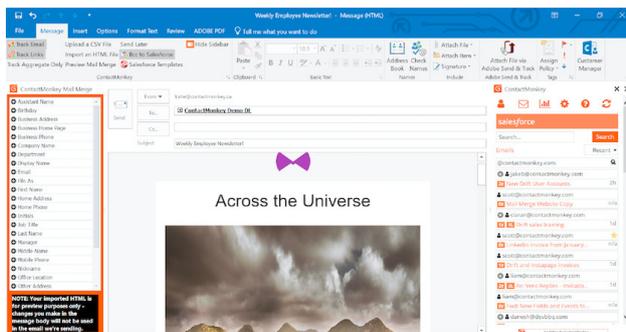
1) Choose Your Template

From basic to more advanced templates, you can access pre-built templates and customize them as you like. No more boring, plain text emails!

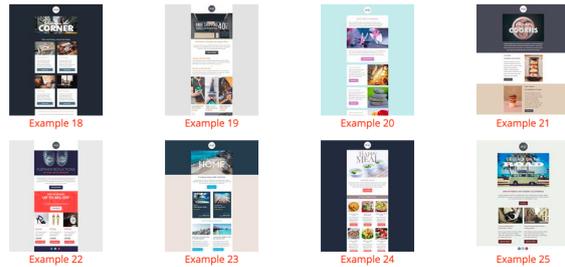


3) Preview Desktop & Mobile

“Preview” lets you view what your recipients will see, on both desktop and mobile.

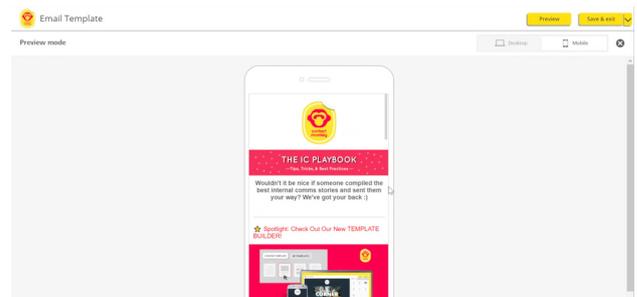


Advanced Templates



2) Design Your Email

Use our simple drag-and-drop email template builder to customize your designs to match your company's brand colours, messaging and imagery style.



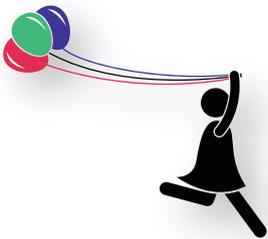
4) Send & Track Your HTML Emails

Send & track your beautifully designed HTML employee newsletter to your existing distribution lists from your Outlook inbox.

Key Takeaways



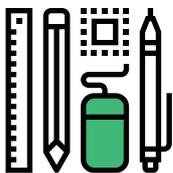
Email responsiveness is a must: to compete with Slack, Instagram, and funny memes your emails need to look the part, on all devices.



Autonomy for communicators: in 2019, you won't have time to rely on designers to make your emails. Embrace easy-to-use tools, instead.



A trusted advisor: your plans won't go anywhere if you don't get C-Suite approval. You'll need to be close to them.



Embrace a multi-touch approach: just like marketers, communicators in 2019 will need to use all of the tools at their disposal to really influence their work.

Conclusion

In order to communicate better and generate better business outcomes, communicators need to start thinking like marketers when it comes to utilizing email as a primary communication channel, while supporting it via other channels.

There's no doubt about the fact that email continues to grow in significance amongst business communicators.

By focusing more on personalization and segmentation, understanding email metrics, ensuring email responsiveness and focusing on storytelling techniques, business communicators can change the entire way they communicate.

This results in higher ROI and happier, more productive employees!

It's no simple task, but it's an important one. The good news is that modern tools allow your results to be directly correlated to the amount of effort you put in.

Say goodbye to depending on designers or executives to get stuff done. In 2019, it will be all up to you. Are you ready?

Email Template Builder

Easy to use drag-and-drop tools. Create perfect emails - no design skills necessary.



Start Building

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